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ABSTRACT

Students can be taught to interpret and write about literature by emphasizing the thinking skills or strategies involved. A series of activities emphasizes thinking skills since this is where textbook teaching methodologies sometimes get off track. The first activity is designed to find out where students are having difficulty in reading and interpreting literature. The following sequence of activities involves character analysis and attempts to help students learn to make inferences involving character analysis and translate interpretations into effective essays. The next activity, called "evidence extract," is designed to help students learn how to support a conclusion with evidence or data. "Warrant workout," the following activity, shows students the importance of providing a link between conclusions and evidence. In the next sequence of activities, students begin to apply the skills they have learned to an independent writing situation. Peer evaluation is used to help students revise their essays. These sequences of activities have been designed to systematically teach students important critical thinking strategies. (Twenty-nine references and an appendix containing activity sheets are attached.) (RS)

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Interpreting and Writing about Literature in the Junior High/Middle School

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INTRODUCTION

Most of us here today have probably had the experience of taking our students through a chapter in one of the many literature anthology-textbooks on the market, and then finding that our students seem genuinely mystified when we ask them to write about a work of literature and apply what they should have learned in studying the chapter. What is the problem? Why do they seem to have so much trouble getting it?

Well, part of the answer may be that the textbooks often treat interpreting and writing about literature as if it were simply a matter of applying a few simple rules, almost grammar-like rules, in very limited ways and the problem is solved.

For example, many literature textbooks, particularly elementary and some middle school books, advise students to read short passages of a text, stop and answer a few questions, which often involve predicting what will happen next, and then continue to read the text. Supposedly, learning this strategy enables students to improve their comprehension and interpretive skills.

If your students are at all like mine, there is nothing they hate more than having to stop reading right at the most exciting point in a story to answer comprehension-prediction questions. Is this sort of thing really helping out students read and interpret literature better, and do the writing assignments often given in literature texts really teach our students to translate their understandings of literature into effective analytical essays. Well, my answer is no. If this textbook instruction is lacking, what is the problem, and how can we really teach our students to interpret and write about literature?

Let me begin by saying that what I am going to show you here today are some ways to help students improve their ability to interpret and write about literature. The emphasis is going to be on teaching students the **thinking skills** or strategies involved in **interpreting** and **writing** about literature. Notice, I said **thinking skills**, and I emphasize those two words for I think that here is where the textbook teaching methodologies get off track. They often seem to forget that interpreting and writing about literature involve some high level thinking skills.

Lets first look briefly at some conceptions of what thinking skills are.

Carl Bereiter in an article in *Educational Leadership* (1984) makes a useful distinction between what he calls, on the one hand, "declarative knowledge" or "verbal rules" and, on the other hand, "procedural knowledge" or "knowledge . . . that becomes manifested in the behavior of the learner." Procedural knowledge, he argues,

> is not a simple matter of reinforcing principles through practice. It means actually *constructing* the cognitive strategy that is referred to by the verbal rules (76).

Instruction that focuses on declarative knowledge or the verbal rules, he goes on to say, results in

> reducing thinking skills to subject matter. And the trouble is that, whereas cognitive strategies are hard to teach directly and take a long time to learn, verbalized rules are easily transferred to a textbook and can be thoroughly taught in a few lessons. Thus, we find textbooks proporting to teach . . . reading comprehension strategies when all they do is list a few rules, provide some examples, and then offer a few exercises in which students are urged to apply the rules (after having been carefully told which rules to apply where) (77).

The disctinction Bereriter makes is important because what he calls "procedural knowledge" or "knowledge that becomes manifested in the behavior of the learner" is what I have in mind by thinking strategies or skills in interpreting and writing about literature.

More importantly, the distinction Bereiter makes points in the direction of what a substantial body of theory and research has to say about what is currently being done in the teaching of think and writing skills. Most prominent are the results of the 1979-80 National Assessment of Educational Progress report, *Reading, Thinking, and Writing* (1981). The authors of this report found that students in 1979 were less able than were students in 1969 to think and write critically. Specifically, the report found "disturbing" declines in the ability of students to demonstrate "reasoned and disciplined thought"; and the authors said that the most disturbing conclusion they drew from their study was that "hardly any of the students .

. . showed evidence of having and using a systematic approach to the analytic tasks" asked of them on the tests. One reason for this situation, I would argue, is that too often writing in the textbooks and in many curricula, particularly writing about literature, is *assigned* but not taught.

I am not citing this report to teacher bash. In fact, there has been enough teacher bashing of late. Rather, I want to look at what the authors of the report argue can be done to improve the situation (put up overhead); first, they say that "more situations must be created that require students to explain and defend their opinions and conclusions at some length--this includes both discussion activities in which students must contend with the immediate demands of an audience and extended writing situations requiring more than a paragraph." In addition, "students need to be shown a variety of problem-solving and critical thinking strategies". They also suggest the use of various types of small-group discussion activities to provide each student with opportunities to state and defend interpretations and conclusions. Also, they suggest a shift from worksheets requiring short answer and multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank answers to an emphasis on giving students opportunities to explain and defend their judgments at some length. Most important of all, they argue for systematic approaches to teaching students critical thinking and problem-solving strategies. Also, I think that it is important to note that they found a positive relationship between engagement and critical thinking skills. In other words, instruction that focuses on thinking skills tends to get students more involved positively in what goes on in the classroom.

Another major study came to some of the same conclusions with regard to thinking skills. John Goodlad in his study *A Place Called School* (1983) makes some of the same recomendations for placing more emphasis

on thinking skills. Goodlad says that the bulk of what he saw in the 1,016 classrooms he observed was that "teaching procedures, curricula, and textbooks seemed to be geared to the lowest common denominator," and what he rarely saw were "teaching procedures, curricula, and textbooks that emphasized "problem solving and inquiry."

Goodlad, like the NAEP, recommends that there needs to be more collaborative small-group work, more student-to-student discussion activities, more students planning and initiating their own learning and active involvement in teacher designed tasks, more reading and writing at some length, and more opportunities for students to create their own products, speculate on meanings, and discuss alternative interpretations.

In addition, George Hillocks, in his review of 20 years of research in the teaching of composition, *Research in Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching* (1986), echoes many of the same recommendations of Goodlad and the NAEP. In one major part of his study, Hillocks did a meta-analysis of hundreds of studies on the teaching of writing to find out what works best--that is the part I went over with you last time I was here. He found that instruction that focuses on the strategies of inquiry or thinking skills like those that I am going to show you today was far more effective at improving student writing than any other type of instruction.

In addition, he found that when instruction that focuses on inquiry or thinking strategies also involved small-group problem-solving activities that actively engaged students in high levels of student interaction concerning specific tasks with a minimum amount of teacher lecture ow what Goodlad calls "the frontal asault," then the gains in student writing were even greater.

Clearly these researchers indicate that there is a need for teaching thinking skills to improve student reading and writing and they indicate

some definite ways that instruction should be set up to teach these skills. The instruction that I am going to present today is designed to meet this need and is designed with the recommendations of these studies in mind.

ARGUMENTATION

One way to teach students a variety of critical thinking strategies is to look at instruction in terms of the types of thinking skills or strategies we would like students to learn which will help them master the material they study in various subjects they study in school. The thinking skills involved in effective argumentation are certainly skills we would like all students to learn.

The research I have referred to indicates that it is not enough to simply *tell* students what the elements of an effective argument are and then expect them to be able to do it or as Bereiter suggests, telling students the verbal rules of effective argumentation is not going to help most students master these complex skills. And, an even more basic question is, "What are the skills and sub-skills involved in effective argumentation?"

One useful conception of the skills of argumentation is Stephen Toulmin's (1958) analysis of argumentation:

1. Making a claim(s);
2. Giving data, evidence for the claim;
3. Providing the warrants(s), the link which shows the relation between data and claim;
4. Anticipating possible objection from the audience and answering them.

I don't think I need to tell you that most textbooks rarely provide instruction in most of these elements of effective argumentation; and when they do it is usually presented in the form of verbal rules, and as Bereiter says, it is presented so that students are told what the rules are and told where and when to apply the rules. It is little wonder that they do not know how to write effective argumentative essays after such instruction.

ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE

Given Toulmin's analysis, it would seem to be a simple matter of teaching students the thinking skills involved in effective argumentation and then they would be able to use those skills whenever they had a task that required argumentation. For example, once they know these skills they should be able to write effective argumentative essays about literature.

But, the problem is when we ask students to write essays interpreting literature, they also have to make inferences and interpretations about literature *before* they can turn their analyses into compositions. In other words, they have to use a number of high-level thinking strategies to interpret literature; then, they have to use a very different set of high-level thinking strategies to translate their interpretations and conclusions into effective essays about literature.

So, before we can teach students the skills involved in argumentative writing, we need to know what thinking skills are involved in reading and interpreting literature.

The first activity I am going to ask you to do is designed to illustrate some important skills involved in reading and interpreting literature that are essential if students are to comprehend and write about literature.

Once we do this, I will show you how to put together instruction that will teach students to interpret and write about literature.

"THE BUTTERFLY"

Before we can determine the skills involved in reading and interpreting literature, we need to have a work of literature to work with. So, if you would turn to the next page of your hand-out where you should find the short story, "The Butterfly" by James Hanley (this story is not included here).

Could I ask for a volunteer to read the story aloud while the rest of us follow along silently. Thank you.

A TAXONOMY OF SKILLS IN READING AND INTERPRETING FICTION

Please turn to the next page of your handout, labelled, "A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction" (Appendix, p. 34). I'd like you to read over the seven questions, A through G, and in the blanks at the bottom of the page please indicate how you would order these questions from *least* to *most* difficult. In other words, if you think "A" is the least difficult question, you would put that in the blank at the left, and if you think "C" is the second least difficult question, you would put that in the blank next to "A" and so on up to the last blank on the far right where you would put the

question you think was most difficult. Okay, I'll give you a few minutes to complete that step, and then I'll tell you what we are going to do next.

(Put blanks on blackboard, 1-7)

Now, lets have a volunteer, what did you put as the least difficult question? Anybody have a different possibility? Anybody have something different? Well, lets have a show of hands--how many put _____? How many put _____? How many put _____? Anybody have something different?

(Repeat procedures, and so on through the blanks.)

Well, now the question is who is right or is there a right answer? Yes, there is a right answer, and here they are: B is least difficult, G is second least difficult, D is one level up from G, A is next and in the middle, E is more difficult than A, C is more difficult than E, and F is the most difficult questions. (List correct answers in the blanks or a second set of blanks.) The sheet I am handing out to you now, "A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction" (Appendix, pp. 35-36), describes how these questions have been categorized in an important study by Hillocks (1980) and Hillocks and Ludlow (1984). (Go over the sheet, but use examples from "Butterfly" sheet.)

Hillocks wanted to find out if there are particular skills involved in comprehension and interpreting fiction and something even more important which I will tell you about in a moment--note, he is talking not just about comprehension which is the primary focus of much reading comprehension theory and research, but also interpretation of fiction. Hillocks wrote comprehension and interpretation questions for three short stories, "The Butterfly" and three other short stories and chapter one of Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. Then, he gave these selections and questions to hundreds of students,

elementary through graduate school in English. He gave the questions to students in various forms, with the questions mixed in different orders.

What he discovered is very interesting and has important implications for setting up literature instruction. Hillocks suspected that comprehension and interpretative skills might be hierarchical and taxonomical. Now, I don't really want to get into a technical explanation of the difference between these two things and why demonstrating that these skills are both taxonomical and hierarchical is important, so I hope you'll accept my statement that his studies show that they are both. And, then permit me to explain for our purposes here today what it means.

What he found is that in fact the questions written at each level do represent an increased level of difficulty, in other words, a key detail question is more difficult than a basic stated information question, and a stated relationship question is more difficult than a key detail question, and so on and so on.

More importantly, he found that if a student was able to answer say an author's generalization question, then he or she tended to be able to answer all the questions at lower levels. Conversely, if a student was not able to answer a complex implied relationship question, then he or she tended not to be able to answer questions at levels above the complex implied relationship.

This has important implications for instruction. If, for example, the focus of instruction is at two or more levels above where a group of students are able to answer questions, then the instruction is probably not going to be successful.

Remember when I mentioned literature textbooks before. If you think for a moment about some typical questions that you find after

selections in textbooks in terms of the question types I have shown you, you'll be able to see why much textbook instruction on interpreting literature is not very effective. They often tend to fall into two patterns--either most or all of the questions are at the literal level, and then jump to a structural generalization question; or, much worse and more frustrating for students is when the more difficult inferential questions, structural or author's generalization, are the first or one of the first questions--which means that students often can't answer it, get frustrated and don't even bother with the rest of questions.

What Hillocks' research suggests is that if we want our students to learn the comprehension and interpretive skills necessary for them to effectively analyze literature, we need to set up instruction so that it moves them from the level on the hierarchy where they are to mastering the next level, and then on to the next level, and so on.

Hillocks' research also indicates something else that is important. Most secondary students, and in particular those at the lower secondary level, tend to have difficulty with questions at the simple implied and complex implied relationships levels. This means that we should be setting up instruction so that it helps students master skills at those levels before moving on to more difficult levels.

One important question I need to answer at this point before I go on to the first activity for students: Unfortunately, the questions are not generic--that is, a given set of questions for a work of fiction must be designed in terms the text. For example, in one story an answer to a given question might be a basic stated information question, but in another story a similar question might be a complex implied relationship question. Therefore, constructing a set of questions like these can be difficult.

In my own teaching, I have used the set for Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and for "The Butterfly" to find out where my students are having difficulty, and each time I have done it, the results I have gotten confirm Hillocks' findings. Then, I have gone over the results with my students to show them where they are having trouble and what we are going to be working on in class.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS SEQUENCE

The sequence of activities I am going to show you, and have you do some parts of, focuses on character analysis. Those of you that have tried to teach character analysis are probably keenly aware of some of the problems:

1. Textbooks can't agree on what it is, so each time we teach it, we must start from scratch;
2. of course, students also must make inferences, most often at the simple implied and complex implied levels, which complicates the problem;
3. and then of course, the problem is further complicated by the problems students will have in trying to translate their interpretations of character into effective character analysis essays.

As I suggested earlier, this sequence of activities attempts to help students learn to make necessary inferences, most often at the simple implied and complex implied relationships levels, involving character analysis and translate interpretations into effective essays analyzing a character. The instruction is also set up to overcome the problem I just identified with regard to textbooks, and, more importantly, it is set up to

incorporate the recommendations for improving instruction identified by the NAEP, Goodlad, and Hillocks.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY--CARTOON CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The first activity I am going to show you is designed to focus students on what is involved in character analysis and prepare students for doing this with literature. Turn to the next page of your handout (see Appendix, p. 37 for the "Cartoon Character Analysis" activity sheet. The cartoon series is not included with this paper.)

As the directions state, the eight cartoon strips are from the series, "Winnie Winkle." The series involves a fashion designer named Winnie and her family who have befriended Connie, a recent immigrant from South America, and Marinka, the director and owner of a top modeling agency. Marinka has signed Connie to a modeling contract after meeting her through Winnie. Students are asked to read and then complete the chart and answer the two questions at the bottom. The focus is on the characters of Marinka and Winnie. Students are directed to examine physical characteristics of each, their surroundings, their concerns, their motivations, and their actions. The two questions direct students to determine what details they have gathered suggest about Marinka and Connie as people. In other words, they are examining those things that reveal their character.

I usually have students fill in the chart individually or in small groups. Then, we discuss what they have come up with. For example, students often note that Marinka is concerned about money, power, and wealth. Winnie, on the other hand, is most often concerned about the welfare of others, friendship, and being happy.

Then, as a class we discuss the two questions at the bottom. In literature, these two questions are often at the simple and complex implied relationship levels. Of course, they see that Winnie is a good, kind, friendly, giving, person, and Marinka is an evil, selfish, mean, hateful person.

As a follow up, I often have students write a short paper utilizing details from their charts to support their conclusions about one of the two characters. I think you can see how this activity introduces the interpretive and writing skills involved in analyzing and writing about a character. In other words, it provides a cognitive map which provides a framework for understanding (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter 1984, Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen 1984, Smagorinsky 1989, and Smagorinsky, McCann, and Kern 1986).

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

I am going to ask you to do the next activity to show you the dynamics of how this key activity works. This activity,

1. helps students make necessary inferences, simple and complex implied relationships;
2. provides a common vocabulary for talking about character analysis, a key problem in trying to teach students character analysis;
3. designed to do a couple of other things that I'll tell you about after you have done the activity.

This is an important step in helping students learn how to make inferences and translate these into compositions.

Please turn to the next page in your handout (Appendix, p. 38). As you can see the sheet lists twenty-two possible values. What you are going to have to do is to determine the most important and least important values for the characters of Brother Timothy and Cassidy in "The Butterfly."

1. the first step is to define any terms the students may have trouble with such as "morality";
2. then go over the directions. In this case, I want you to list the top three values and bottom three values in order for Brother Timothy and Cassidy.
3. put students in small groups;
4. and, I'll give you 15 minutes to come up with your rankings.

(While the groups work, put blanks on board for top values only.) Now that you have all finished let's find out what you put. (Put values on the board. Discuss and debate possible rankings and why one value is more important than another. Discuss and debate least important values, focusing on why one value is less important than another.)

Notice, that besides providing a common vocabulary, the structure of the activity helps students make simple and complex implied relationships involving character. In addition, the activity is structured to create controversy (Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen 1984). There are no easy answers. In other words, students must content with the immediate demands of an audience in trying to explain their interpretations. Students

must continually return to the text to support and explain their interpretations. In addition, the discussion helps students clarify their interpretations. Hearing what other students have to say helps students refine their interpretations or change them if they are off base. Finally, and this is extremely important, the activity is set up to so that students are orally practicing the skills involved in argumentation that they will be using later in writing a character analysis essay.

Notice how this activity mirrors the cartoon character analysis students did. In this case, students look at Brother Timothy and Cassidy in much the same manner as they did with Winnie and Marinka. Just as Winnie and Marinka had very different values which brought them into conflict, so do Brother Timothy and Cassidy. Whereas Cassidy values pleasure, beauty, and friendship, Brother Timothy values power, tradition, and loyalty. These values bring these characters into conflict. The activity helps students make inferences about these characters, how they are different, and why they are in conflict. Ultimately, it helps them understand what the author is saying in the story.

Notice the generic structure of this activity. You can use it with any work of literature in which the author is attempting to contrast the values of two characters.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS--CHANGE OF VALUES

Doing this one activity is not going to be enough for most students. They need practice and more importantly, writers do not always structure a story with a contrast in values between two characters as a primary focus.

In order to do the next two activities, we need a new work of literature to work with. So, if you will look at the story on the next page of your handout, you'll see "A Question of Blood" by Ernest Haycox (story is not included in this paper).

Could I ask somebody to read this story aloud, while the rest of us follow along silently.

If you'll look at the "Character Analysis" sheet on the next page (Appendix, p. 39), you'll see how I have modified the sheet for this particular story. Instead of comparing two characters, it is set up to help students see how a character's values change from the beginning to the end of the story. Obviously, I think you can see that this activity can be done with almost any major character in any work of literature in which a major character goes through a change. It asks students to evaluate the character's values at the beginning and at the end of the story. I use the same procedures as I described for "The Butterfly"; one variation is to have students rank the character of Frank Isabel on their own before they move into small groups.

This activity helps students see how a character's values change. For example, many students rank "independence" as one of Frank's top values early in the story because one of the reasons he moved to the Yellow Hills was the freedom and opportunity there. They also put "acceptance" as one of his least important values because he did not care about what others thought of the way he lived.

However, when they rank his values at the end of the story, after Isabel has turned against his Indian wife, students often put "acceptance" as one of his most important values and "autonomy" as one of his least

important values. In other words, students begin to see how a character changes as a result of his experiences.

Of course, other students suggest different values and debate ensues. In discussing their rankings students find specific and concrete ways to talk about the actions and motives of a character, and they are practicing making and supporting conclusions or claims. As students debate possible values in their small groups and in the whole class discussion, they reach a fuller understanding of the character. As the class discusses their findings, their interpretations are at a high level because of their previous work.

EVIDENCE EXTRACT

Once students have done the character analysis for Frank Isabel, the next step is to begin helping students see how to translate their conclusions and interpretations, or claims as Toulmin would say, about character into written essays.

If you reflect back for a moment to the beginning of my presentation and the skills involved in writing argumentation I presented, you'll remember that students need to be able to makeor state a claim, and then to give data to support the claim. This next activity, which I call "Evidence Extract" (Appendix, pp. 40-41). is designed to help students learn how to support a conclusion with evidence or data.

Teaching students how to do this is important. The NAEP report I cited concluded that this is one of the things students do not know how to do--they argued that students need more activities which require them to support, explain, and defend their interpretations. This activity shows them how to support conclusions. It also requires them to focus back on the text

to find evidence to support their conclusions. In addition, it models what a thesis statement is and helps them move away from what they typically tend to do which is to provide a plot summary.

I'm going to ask you to do this activity as I would have students do it. This will help give you a sense of the skills students are learning. Also, it will help you anticipate potential difficulties students will have and consider ways to deal with them. Finally, it will give you a sense of the way this works in class with students.

After passing out and going over the directions for part A on the "Evidence Extract" sheet, I put students in small groups of three to five. I give the groups about fifteen minutes to do this part. Then, we discuss their answers. In the small group and whole class discussions, students come to see that answers such as #2 and #7 do not support the thesis or claim and answers like #3 are weak because it is not specific evidence from the story.

Then, put students back in groups to do parts B, C, and D. You then might have each group report their findings and go over their answers in a whole class discussion. A variation on this that I like is to have small groups exchange answers and critique the thesis and evidence of another group. It can be a very effective way to help students see that their thesis and evidence may be effective or weak.

I think it is very important to note here that textbooks rarely give students activities such as this. They seem to assume that students know what effective evidence is, know how to find it, and know what evidence will and will not support a thesis. My experience is that most often students are not able to do any of these things. In fact, they often have no idea that they need to support their conclusions with anything other than their personal opinions.

WARRANT WORKOUT

If you students are at all like mine, they seem genuinely mystified when I ask them to explain how their evidence supports their thesis. Their usual response, although not usually articulated so clearly, is "The evidence speaks for itself." In short, they simply do not see a need to explain how their evidence proves what they say it does.

This next activity, "Warrant Workout" (Appendix, p. 42), is designed to help them with this problem. It shows them the importance of providing a link between conclusions and evidence. This activity focuses on the third skill involved in argumentation as identified by Toulmin.

It begins by giving them the same thesis they worked with in "Evidence Extract." Then, the directions ask them to examine three examples that could be used to support the thesis. It then asks them to write a sentence or two explaining how the evidence supports the thesis. Notice that it indicates that their sentences should be written so that they could be included in a paragraph of evidence supporting the writer's thesis.

The way I do this activity is to put students into small groups or sometimes pairs and have them write their sentences. Then, I have the groups or pairs exchange papers or meet together and indicate if the sentences explain how the evidence supports the thesis.

What happens is usually pretty interesting. Some groups or pairs inevitably write something like, "This shows that Frank Isabel values independence at the beginning of the story." The group or pair who evaluates the warrant tells the group or pair that wrote the sentence that it does not support the thesis. The group that wrote the weak warrants sees

how theirs differs from the other group or pair that wrote effective warrants. But, usually there is one group or pair, often lazy boys, who simply do not want to accept reality. So, I offer to give their warrants to another group or pair who tells them the same thing. Sometimes I even have to call the whole class together and put one of theirs on the board and contrast it with an effective warrant before they will accept the inevitable. But, ultimately, everyone usually gets it.

The next step of the activity provides a link to the previous activity, "Evidence Extract." They are asked to write a warrant for each of the pieces of evidence they found to support the thesis they wrote. As you can see, once students have completed this step they have practiced all the steps involved in writing a thesis, finding and stating supporting evidence, and explaining how their evidence supports the thesis.

"PETER AT FOURTEEN"--CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Next in your handouts you will find three poems, "Moco Limping" by David Nava Monreal, "Fifteen" by William Stafford, and "Peter at Fourteen" by Constance Carrier (poems are not included in this paper), and a sheet labelled, "Analyzing Values--Poetry" (Appendix, p. 43). I have included these for three reasons. First, I wanted you to see that the character analysis activity I showed you earlier can be easily modified to work with poetry involving character analysis. These three poems are ones that I have used successfully with students. Secondly, I wanted you to see how I modified the activity to work with one particular poem, "Peter at Fourteen."

If you will look at the activity sheet, you will see that it contains the same list of 22 possible values. However, if you will look at the bottom of

the sheet, you will see an important modification. I ask students to list the two most important values, and two least important values rather than three and three. The reason for this is that there simply aren't as many possible values for the character.

Notice also that the two columns indicate that students are to list Peter's current values at age 14 according to the narrator, and Peter's future values as predicted by the narrator.

The directions at the bottom indicate the third reason I included this poem and this Analyzing Values sheet. Once students have done the activities I have shown you so far, they are ready to try to put everything together regarding what they have learned about interpreting and writing about a character's values.

As you can see, the short writing assignment asks them interpret Peter's values, write a thesis, give evidence, and provide warrants. In addition, it asks them to explain the reasons for the change in values. Depending upon your students, you might modify this and have them only focus on his top values and reason for the change, or simply focus on the top value presently and as predicted by the narrator. This activity also gives students practice in putting together what they have learned so far.

What is most exciting about doing this activity with poetry is seeing students enthusiastically discussing their interpretations and conclusions, something which is somewhat of a rarity when it comes to poetry.

RICHARD WRIGHT AND COMPOSITION PLANNING SHEET

Once students have practiced analyzing characters in activities like the ones I have shown you, they should be ready for an independent activity in which they must apply the skills they have learned in previous activities.

The next three pages of your handouts contains an excerpt from Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (pp. 9-13, Harper and Row Publishers, 1937) (the excerpt is not included with this paper) and a "Composition Planning Sheet" (Appendix, pp. 44-45).

The directions on the Planning Sheet asks students to read the excerpt and then write a composition in which they explain the narrator's top value at the beginning of the excerpt, top value at the end, and how the narrator's values change and why. It provides a model thesis and instructs them to first determine the character's top value at the beginning and at the end before attempting to write a thesis. It then provides a place for them to list evidence and warrants to support the character's top value at the beginning and at the end, and evidence to support the change in values. Note that the only difference between what they are doing here and what they have done previously is that it asks them to do it on their own.

Once students have completed the sheet, have them write their compositions, or if you think they need a bit more help, you might have them meet in small groups to critque planning sheets before they write their papers.

In this activity students are applying in an independent writing situation the analytical and writing strategies that have been the focus of the sequence of activities.

CHECK SHEET

Once students have written what they *think* is their final composition, and I emphasize the word *think*; because if your students are anything at all like mine, and I suspect they are--they think that whatever words they first put down on paper are the final and last words on the subject--anyway, when they bring in what they think is their final composition, you are ready for the next activity which is on the next page of the handout.

The "Check Sheet" (Appendix, p. 46) is set up to involve students in peer evaluation of the essays they have written which should help them in revising their essays.

I think it is important that I take a few moments to discuss peer evaluation. Peer evaluation has become very popular in recent years. When it first hit the scene I rather quickly jumped on the bandwagon, and frankly the more I worked with it, the more I began to have some problems with it. Yet, I think it has real value. And so, if you'll indulge me for a moment, I would like to examine its value, some problems, and how I have tried to overcome some of the problems.

Peer Evaluation--value of

I think there are at least five good reason why we should use peer evaluation in teaching writing:

1. it provides an audience response other than the teacher;
2. it provides feedback to help students revise--we know that they are often more likely to revise when their peers tell them something needs revised than when the teacher tells them the same thing;
3. students hear other students' papers, and as a result

they compare these papers to their own and often have a much better sense of the quality of their paper in relation to the work of other students;

4. it can make grading easier for the teacher--as a result of the feedback they have received and the fact that they know how their papers stack up to others, grading is often less of a chore;
5. perhaps most important of all, it teaches students that revision is part of the writing process.

There are probably many other reasons why peer evaluation is important, but these are certainly five important reasons why it is.

Peer Evaluation--some problems with

However, there are some problems with peer evaluation:

1. Some students have trouble being critical of their peers' writing--I call this the "everything is wonderful syndrome."
2. On the other hand, some students are exactly the reverse: they are too critical. Nothing that anybody writes is any good.
3. Finally, and I think this is often related to the first two I mentioned, students sometimes focus on the wrong things. They might dwell on the choice of a word here or there, and the real problem is that the student says nothing in the essay.

Peer Evaluation--overcoming some of the difficulties

The "Check Sheet" and the ways in which I use this activity repesents one way that I have come with to try to overcome some of the difficulties I have encountered with doing peer evaluation activities.

The first and most important way is that I have students usually in small groups, but sometimes in pairs, and sometimes individually apply specific criteria that have been the focus of instruction to their compositions.

If you will look at the sheet, I'll show you what I mean. questions #1 through #7 represent what has been the focus of the instructional activities I showed you--stating a thesis, providing supporting evidence, and providing warrants. By focusing questions on the specific writing skills I have taught them, students know what to look for and how to tell if something is good or needs improvement.

Also, note that these questions are all Yes/No questions. I have found that by simply requiring students to give a yes or no response--does the paper have it or doesn't it--that it takes some of the pressure off them, and they will more likely give an honest, truthful answer.

I use various other strategies to help insure the success of peer evaluation. For example, sometimes I put them in small groups and have groups evaluate the papers from another group. In this way, no one is reading a paper of a student sitting there in the group.

Another strategy is to switch classes. That is, I will have my 2nd period class rate the papers from my 6th period class.

Still another strategy is to cut students names off of the papers and have students rate papers anonymously.

When I have students meet in small groups, I have the group read one composition at a time, and fill out one check sheet per paper.

When I have students rate papers individually, I simply collect all the papers, hand out three or four check sheets to each student and then give each student someone else's paper. When a student finishes a paper, he or she raises his or her hand and I give that student another paper. By the end of the period each student's paper has been read by three or four other students.

In one or two instances, I have even gone so far as to count the evaluations of other students' work as part of their composition grade.

You probably have devleoped some strategies of your own to help make peer evaluation work. These are some that I have had success with.

Once students have filled out the check sheets, I have them return to check sheets and papers to the writers. I then tell the write's to look them over and if they have mostly No's on their check sheets, then their paper needs some revision. I then give them the opportunity to revise their essays.

Before someone asks, the answer is yes, look at question #8. I do have students look at other students' writing for grammar, punctuation, etc. Note that I have them do this last, after they have examined the paper for content. The reason for this is that proofreading is the last thing I want them to look at. In fact, I sometimes even set this up in different ways.

Read first for spelling, then punctuation, then capitalization, then usage or any special problems I think they may have. What I am trying to do here is model the idea that proofreading is the last step before revision.

Note that I have a question #9 down here, but I have left it as optional. The reason is that anticipating objections to claims and then stating and supporting counter-arguments, Toulmins's fourth aspect of argumentative writing, is pretty difficult. While the instruction I have

shown you does in fact work on these skills, they may be a little too difficult for some middle-school students. I know that my juniors and seniors have a great deal of difficulty getting this. Therfore, I made this optional.

THAT AWKWARD AGE--STUDENT ESSAY

The next four pages of the handout (Appendix, pp. 47-50) contains a paper written by one of my eleventh grade average students on "After the Ball," a short story by Sally Benson. The essay shows a sophisticated analysis of the main character, an effective use of evidence and explanation of evidence to support the student's viewpoint. In short, this student essay illustrates how using a squence of activities like I have shown you here today can provide students with the kind of instruction the NAEP, Goodlad, and Hillocks say is necessary to improve students' abilities to analyze and write about literature.

SUMMARY OF SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

A number of key elements have been built into the instruction I have shown you here today:

1. first, there has been a systematic focus on key interpretive reading and writing skills;
2. the activities have moved from more structure at the beginning when introducing skills to students to less structure and finally to independence at the end;
3. the activities have been set up to actively engage students in

problem-centered activities to teach students critical thinking and analytical skills involved in interpreting and writing about literature;

4. there have been short assignments along the way to assess student progress;
5. the independent assignment at the end is designed to assess student mastery of skills;
6. The activities have progressed from easy to more difficult in terms of materials, tasks, and concepts to help ensure mastery of skills;
7. The instruction has provided numerous small group and whole class discussion activities designed to put students in situations where they must content with the immediate demands of an audience;
8. the activities have also provided opportunities for students to explain and defend their interpretations at some length;
9. and finally, the sequence of activities has attempted to **systematically** teach students important critical thinking strategies.

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APPENDIX

INSTITUTE ACTIVITY SHEETS

A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction*

"The Butterfly"

by James Hanley

Indicate how these questions would be ordered from **least** to **most** difficult.

A. Cassidy had explained why he missed mass. Why did he not repeat his explanation to Brother Timothy?

B. Where was Cassidy being held?

C. What idea does the author suggest about the effects of people's approaches to religion? In answering the questions, consider Cassidy's and Timothy's approaches to religion.

D. Why did Cassidy miss mass?

E. In what way are Brother Timothy's actions toward the caterpillar and Cassidy similar? Explain the similarity as clearly as you can.

F. Explain three ways in which the author uses the caterpillar in developing the story?

F. What did Cassidy do at the end of the story?

1. (least) ___ 2. ___ 3. ___ 4. ___ 5. ___ 6. ___ 7. (most) ___

*Adapted from Hillocks and Ludlow. "A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction." *American Educational Research Journal* 21 (Spring 1984): 7-24.

A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction*

By Goerge Hillocks, Jr., The University of Chicago

The Skill Types (Examples are based on Chapter 1 of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*)

Literal Level

1. Basic Stated Information--Identifying frequently stated information which presents some condition crucial to the story.
   Example: What happened to Coyotito?

2. Key Detail--Identifying a detail which appears at some key juncture of the plot and which bears a causal relationship to what happens.
   Example: Where did Coyotito sleep?

3. Stated Relationship--Identifying a statement which explains the relationship between at least two pieces of information in the text.
   Example: What was the beggars' reason for following Kino and Juana to the doctor's house?

Inferential Level

4. Simple Implied Relationship--Inferring the relationship between two pieces of information usually closely juxtaposed in the text.
   Example: What were Kino's feelings about the pearls he offers the doctor? Explain how you know.

5. Complex Implied Relationship--Inferring the relationship(s) among many

pieces of information spread throughout large parts of the text.

Example: In this chapter, Kino appears at home and in town. He feels and acts differently in these two places. Part of the difference is the result of what happened to Coyotito. Part is the result of other things.

a) What are the differences between the Kino acts and feels at home and in town?

b) Apart from what happened to Coyotito, explain the causes of those differences.

6. Author's Generalization--Inferring a generalization about the world outside the work from the fabric of the work as a whole.

Example: What comment or generalization does this chapter make on the way "civilization" influences human behavior and attitudes? Give evidence from the story to support your answer.

7. Structural Generalization--Generalizing about how parts of the work operate together to achieve certain effects.

Example: Steinbeck presents a group of beggars in the story.

a) Explain what purpose they serve in relation to the first eleven paragraphs of the story.

b) Present evidence from the story to support your answer.

*Adapted from:

Hillocks, George. "Toward a Hierarchy of Skills in the Comprehension of Literature." *English Journal* 69 (March 1980): 54-59; and

Hillocks, George and Ludlow, Larry. "A Taxonomy of Skills in Reading and Interpreting Fiction." *American Journal of Educational Research* 93 (April 1984): 133-170.

CARTOON CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Directions: Examine the strips from the newspaper cartoon "Winnie Winkle." The series involves a fashion designer named Winnie and her family who have befriended Connie, a recent immigrant from South America, and Marinka, the director and owner of a top modeling agency. Marinka has signed Connie to a modeling contract after meeting her through Winnie.

After examining the strips, fill in the following chart concerning Winnie and Marinka.

	Marinka	Winnie
Describe the physical characteristics (dress, hair, accessories, etc.) of each.		
What are the surroundings of each?		
What are the concerns of each?		
What is the motivation of each?		
Describe the actions of each.		

1. Considered together, what do these specific details suggest about Winnie as a person?

2. Considered together, what do these specific details suggest about Marinka as a person?

Character Analysis--Two Characters

VALUES:

1. Acceptance (Approval from others)
2. Achievement
3. Beauty
4. Companionship (Friendship)
5. Creativity
6. Health
7. Honesty
8. Independence
9. Justice
10. Knowledge
11. Love
12. Loyalty
13. Morality
14. Physical Appearance
15. Pleasure
16. Power
17. Recognition
18. Religious Faith
19. Self-respect
20. Skill
21. Tradition
22. Wealth

Characters Analyzed _____ _____

	First Character	Second Character
What does the character value *most?* List his/her top three values *in order.*	1. _____	1. _____
	2. _____	2. _____
	3. _____	3. _____
What does the character value *least?* List his/her bottom three values *in order.*	20. _____	20. _____
	21. _____	21. _____
	22. _____	22. _____

Be prepared to present **reasons** and **evidence** for your choices.

Adapted from Kahn, Elizabeth A., Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen. *Writing about Literature.* ERIC/NCTE, 1984, pp. 28-32.

Character Analysis

VALUES:

1. Acceptance (Approval from others)
2. Achievement
3. Beauty
4. Companionship (Friendship)
5. Creativity
6. Health
7. Honesty
8. Independence
9. Justice
10. Knowledge
11. Love
12. Loyalty
13. Morality
14. Physical Appearance
15. Pleasure
16. Power
17. Recognition
18. Religious Faith
19. Self-respect
20. Skill
21. Tradition
22. Wealth

Character Analyzed _____

	Character's Values Early in the Work	If the character changes, Values Near the End
What does the character value *most?* List his/her top three values *in order.*	1. _____	1. _____
	2. _____	2. _____
	3. _____	3. _____
What does the character value *least?* List his/her bottom three values *in order.*	20. _____	20. _____
	21. _____	21. _____
	22. _____	22. _____

Be prepared to present **reasons** and **evidence** for your choices.

Adapted from Kahn, Elizabeth A., Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen. *Writing about Literature.* ERIC/NCTE, 1984, pp. 28-32.

Evidence Extract--Supporting Claims

Thesis(claim): At the beginning of "A Question of Blood," the main character, Frank Isabel, values independence above all else.

The student who wrote this thesis ranked "independence" as Isabel's #1 value at the beginning of the story.

A. The following is a list of possible evidence that this student has generated to support the thesis. Circle the number of the statements that would provide specific and persuasive evidence for the thesis. Which of these are not specific and/or persuasive? Explain your responses.

1. Isabel is described in the story as being "self-willed" and "self-sufficient."

2. Isabel likes and respects the Indians even though no one else agrees with him.

3. Isabel is happiest by himself and enjoys the solitude of the open country.

4. Isabel chooses to settle in a place where reaching the nearest town takes four days of travel and where his nearest neighbor is seventy miles away.

5. When all the other men begin to send their squaws back to the reservation, Isabel refuses, telling his wife that he is not ashamed of her.

6. "By angry command," Isabel "establishes the habit of eating at table instead of crosslegged on a floor blanket."

7. Isabel "had a backwoodman's lank loose height, his eyes were almost black and though he kept a smooth-shaven face there was always a clay-blue cast to the long sides of his jaw.

B. What evidence in the first nine paragraphs might someone point to, if he or she were arguing that Isabel does not value independence above all else?

1.

C. Write a thesis stating what you believe Frank Isabel values most by the end of the story.

_____

_____

D. Give three (3) specific and persuasive pieces of evidence to support your thesis (claim).

Warrant Workout

Thesis: In the beginning of "A Question of Blood," Frank Isabel values independence.

Each of the following quotations or example could be used to support the above thesis. After each, in a sentence or two, explain how it supports this claim. Your sentences should be written so that they could be included in a paragraph of evidence supporting the writer's thesis.

1. ". . . his closest white neighbor lived at the newly established Hat ranch, seventy miles over in Two Dance Valley. The Indians were on reservation but it was still risky for a man to be alone in the country. It made no difference to Isabel. He was young and self-willed . . ."

2. Isabel cuts firewood and dresses the game even though his wife suggests that these tasks are "woman's work."

3. When all the other men begin to send their squaws and children back to the reservation, Isabel tells his wife, "Those men are fools. I am not ashamed of you."

For each piece of evidence you gave in Evidence Extract for what Isabel values most by the end of the story, write a sentence or two to explain how it supports your claim.

Analyzing Values--Poetry

VALUES:

1. Acceptance (Approval from others)
2. Achievement
3. Beauty
4. Companionship (Friendship)
5. Creativity
6. Health
7. Honesty
8. Independence
9. Justice
10. Knowledge
11. Love
12. Loyalty
13. Morality
14. Physical Appearance
15. Pleasure
16. Power
17. Recognition
18. Religious Faith
19. Self-respect
20. Skill
21. Tradition
22. Wealth

"Peter at Fourteen"

After you have read "Peter at Fourteen," refer to the list of values above and any additional terms that you wish to use to complete the following.

	Peter's Current Values (at 14) (according to the narrator)	Peter's Future Values (as predicted by narrator)
What does the character value *most?* List his top two values *in order.*	1. _____	1. _____
	2. _____	2. _____
What does the character value *least?* List his bottom two values *in order.*	21. _____	21. _____
	22. _____	22. _____

Write a brief composition in which you explain what, according to the narrator, Peter's most important and least important values are currently (at 14) and what they are predicted to be in the future. Present reasons and evidence for your choices and explain the reason(s) for the change(s) in Peter's values.

Adapted from Kahn, Elizabeth A., Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen. *Writing about Literature.* ERIC/NCTE. 1984. pp. 28-32.

Composition Planning Sheet

Assignment: Read the excerpt from *Black Boy* by Richard Wright and write a composition in which you explain how the narrator's values change and why. Your thesis statement might explain what the character values most in the beginning of the excerpt, what the character values most at or near the end, and the reason(s) for the change in values.

Sample Thesis
At the beginning of "A Question of Blood," Frank Isabel values independence, but after "civilization" comes to the Yellow Hills, he is more concerned about acceptance by others.

Before attempting to formulate a thesis, fill out the "Character Analysis" for the character's values.

THESIS:

_____

_____

_____

List **specific** evidence for the character's top value at the beginning.

EVIDENCE	EXPLANATION of how the evidence supports the thesis

List **specific** evidence for the character's top value at or near the end.

EVIDENCE	EXPLANATION of how the evidence supports the thesis

Explain what **causes** this change in values and list supporting **evidence**.

Check Sheet

Name of Writer_____

Name of evaluator(s)_____

_____

_____

1. Does the writer have a clearly stated thesis that follows the directions of the assignment? YES NO

2. Does the writer provide at least 2 pieces of specific, convincing evidence for the character's top value at the beginning? YES NO

3. Does the writer clearly explain <u>how</u> each piece of evidence supports his/her thesis? YES NO

4. Does the writer provide at least 2 pieces of specific, convincing evidence for the character's top value at the end? YES NO

5. Does the writer clearly explain <u>how</u> each piece of evidence supports his/her thesis? YES NO

6. Does the writer explain the reason(s) for the character's change in values? YES NO

7. Does the writer provide specific evidence to support what he/she gives as reasons for the change? YES NO

_____

8. Reread the paper and mark any places where you think the writer needs to correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, etc.

9. (Optional) What arguments can you think of that might be used against this writer's thesis (claim)?

That Awkward Age

by Christie Donovan

"After the Ball," by Sally Benson is a story about a young girl who does some growing up as a result of her attempts to be accepted by an older crowd of people. At the beginning of the story, Norma Martin values acceptance above all else, but after "the crowd" discovers how old she is, she is more concerned with honesty.

At the start of the story, Norma Martin values acceptance from the older crowd at The Breakers. In order to be accepted by the older crowd, Norma worried about her physical appearance. She knew that if she was going to pass for eighteen she had to look eighteen. Norma's mother noticed Norma changing: "She began to fuss over her appearance, spending hours in the tub, hours over her nails, hours pressing her clothes and getting dressed" (Benson 46). Suddenly, every aspect of Norma's appearance had to be perfect. Once when her mother picked a dress out of the closet Norma stated, "It's too sweet. It makes me look twelve..." (47). Norma felt that if she looked like the rest of the crowd they would accept her as a member of their group; therefore, she refused to wear anything that she thought made her look younger and she would "fuss over her appearance" in the belief that it would make her look older.

That acceptance is most important to Norma can be seen in other ways as well. For example, Norma felt that if you were not a part of the older crowd, you were an absolute nothing and had nothing to live for. She told her mother,

> There are two sets, not counting the actual babies. There are the kids, 14 or 15, and then there's the older crowd. And if you go around with the kids you're absolutely cooked with the older crowd. You might as well be dead. (46)

Norma even risked her friendship with one of her best friends, Annie. "Annie was nice, Norma thought, but Annie was 15. When you were 15, you were as good as dead" (48). She considered dropping Annie because Annie was no longer old enough for her new "crowd".

If friendship meant nothing to Norma, honesty meant even less. Lieing got Norma accepted. No one could have guessed her age seeing her drive around town in the cream colored convertible coupe. She had her driver's license and as far as anyone could tell, she was eighteen. Her

mother was puzzled when Norma came home from the beach "white and tearful." She confronted Norma and asked,

> "Do you mean to tell me no one knew how old you are?"
> "Of course not! You don't think for one minute that Bill or any of them would have paid any attention to me for one minute if they'd known I was sixteen, do you? They thought I was eighteen. I sort of let them think I was." (48-49)

She did not think twice about lieing just as long as she was accepted by the crowd. Later, her lieing would get her in trouble, too!

At the end of the story, Norma values honesty rather than acceptance. For example, after Norma has been stood up by Bill, Mrs. Martin notices that "she is no longer busy with nailpolish and cold cream.... The banner of her lovely youth pulled down as though she wished to hide it" (51). Norma is no longer concerned about her physical appearance. She realizes that it was the makeup and the clothes which made her seem older and made that crowd like her when actually what she really wanted was the crowd to accept her as herself. Norma also realizes that her "kid" friends are very important to her. Instead of getting ready to go out with the crowd one evening, Norma says to her mother:

> "I'm going to sit up a while. I'm going to write some letters. I'm going to write to Annie." ...
> "I was thinking," [Mrs. Martin] said, "that we might hire a sailboat tomorrow and ask that little Jerry to go with us. Or, maybe you two would rather go alone."
> "Mmm, that would be swell," Norma said. (51)

Norma realizes that her friends and not "the crowd" are more important to her now. It seemed to be a life or death situation in the beginning to be accepted by "the crowd," but now her "real" friends are what she considersimportant.

That honesty is Norma's most important value at the end of the story can be most clearly seen in the very last scene. Bill James, one of the "in crowd," shows up at their cottage at midnight. He says he has come to take Norma to the ball. Norma sends him away. Then, she goes to her mother's room and sticks her head in the door:

> "Did you hear that?" asked Norma. "Coming around this time of night. Who does he think he is? What does he think I am?" She smiled suddenly and gaily at her mother. (52)

Norma could have just as easily given in to Bill and gone to the ball, but instead she is being honest with herself by not letting Bill take advantage of her feelings and she is letting him go. The boy who was once so important to her is now a pest.

While it could be argued that Norma becomes increasingly disappointed with "the crowd" as she learns more and more about them and discovers that they really are not as great as she thought they were, there is one incident more than any other that seems to have influenced Norma's change in values. The incident is when the crowd finds out how old she really is. After the older crowd finds Norma's driver's license and discover how old she really is, Norma runs home "white and tearful." Her actions in this scene reveal how old she really is: young and immature. When Norma's mother finds out that no one knew Norma's real age, Norma explains,

> "You don't think for one minute that Bill or any of them would have paid any attention to me for one minute if they'd known I was sixteen, do you? They thought I was about eighteen. I sort of let them think I was." (48-49)

Nere Norma admits that she lied in order to be accepted. This is the first time that she has been openly honest with herself about her former actions.

However, being honest with herself is only the first step for Norma. She also needs to be honest with others and prove to herself that she respects herself. She takes this final step on the night of the ball, around midnight, when Bill James comes to get Norma:

> "Hop into your things," he said.
> Then Norma's voice came to her, cool and fresh. "I couldn't, not possibly. It's late." (52)

Norma's honesty shines through in this entire scene. She shows Bill that he can not order her around or expect her to jump when he says so. In addition, she is finally saying to him what she has thought for quite some time. Then, the two of them begin talking about the rest of "the crowd," especially one of the ladies who sings old songs all the time. When Bill comments that this lady is "all right," Norma replies, "Frankly, she bores me" (52). This shows that Norma is finally being honest with herself and expressing her feelings to Bill. With this step in her transformation complete, Norma sends him away.

In the beginning of the story, being accepted by "the crowd" was extremely important to Norma. However, after this group finds out how old she really is, Norma begins to realize that these people were not her friends but merely a show. Near the end of the story, When Norma goes to the

movie with her mother, she feels perfectly fine not being around all the "friends" or Bill. Norma said, "Oh, I'm not going to sit here and wait for him to stop by every night..." (51). She realizes that she can not be something she is not and who her friends really are. She realizes that honesty is more important than being accepted by others.